

Spring 1964

Insight, 1964 Spring

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spring • insight • 1964

Acipenseridae

INSIGHT



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IN THIS ISSUE WE HAVE INVITED OTHER COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO SUBMIT
LITERATURE AND ART WORK FOR PUBLICATION IN INSIGHT. — EDITOR'S NOTE.

Rebecca Smith

INTRUSION

When a foreign object gets into the eye, it is expelled with tears. When a foreign object tries to intrude on the desert, it is belched free with heaves of sand and donkey dung.

— This will be what I'll remember most — riding in a jeep with the dirty, hot wind plastering my nostrils against my cheeks. I can't breathe . . . damn it, I can't breathe. My eyes are so sore, and the dust. My throat feels like it's lined with mohair. My God, Help! It seems to get worse. Everytime it seems to hurt more. Why do I keep coming back? Why . . . maybe if I had some water . . . the thermos. At least it's not cracked like last time. The water's hot . . . and these dirty, grimy cups. If I put some water on my face . . . dab it behind the ears. Some perfume, mademoiselle. It's no use. Nothing helps. Why don't we get there? Maybe if I turn my head I'll get some relief from the wind. Damn you, wind. Damn you, sun. Damn this country. I don't belong. It's taking everything out of me. I'm going to be drained — dry bones — and my eyes will be scorched out of their sockets. I can feel it. God, I'm wet. Sweaty. Under the arms, between the legs, all around the hair. There goes what's left of my hairdo. What does it matter anyway? There won't be anyone to see it. Why did I come? I knew but I came. It's death. I'm dying. This country hates me. It wants to kill me. Well, go ahead, go on. Keep torturing me. You'll never get me. Never.

Miss Alice Thomas, looking dirty, tired, and very irritable, was met at the gate of the compound by her mother and father. They all embraced fleetingly and looked at each other like old habits. Alice ran quickly through the compound yard and into the house where the air conditioners were on.

"You look tired, Allie," said her mother.

"Tired! I'm demolished. Whew, what a ride. I should have known better than to start out at this time of day. I am so hot. Iran hasn't changed a bit has it?"

"No. I guess it never will, no matter how hard we work. Anyway, it's good seeing you, dear."

"It's good to be here, Mother. At least to be here with you and Daddy. I must look a wreck."

"Maybe it would be better if you rode up in the front of the jeep," said Mrs. Thomas.

"What! Next to Cauliff! And have to listen to him jabber all the way. Besides he would get ideas. You know how these people are."

It was the beginning of another summer for Miss Alice Thomas. It was part of her life. The rest of it was teaching third grade, in public school, in New Jersey. She was tolerated by students and faculty. If there had been anything to keep her in New Jersey during the summers she wouldn't be in Iran. Her roommate always went off alone and mysteriously to Mexico and other friends never extended invitations. Once there had been a man with red hair, but he faded out before final report cards. Miss Thomas was somewhat gray and her hair was coarse and full of permament. She drank Metrecal besides her regular meals to gain weight but stayed tall and skinny. She attributed it to nervous energy, but was really quite lazy. Her eyes were

nebulously colored and were topped with short, straight eyelashes. She could have been anything over thirty years old, but was really only twenty eight. Her father was an engineer, building dams, making rivers out of sand. He disliked his job and the country, but the money was taxfree.

The air conditioners were on full force. Miss Thomas took a shower, combed her hair, put on warm clothes and sat down for her home-coming dinner. It consisted of frozen steaks from the commissary, frozen potatoes from the commissary, frozen beans from the commissary. Dessert was strawberry shortcake, the strawberries being frozen from the commissary.

"This dinner is in your honor, Allie," said Mrs. Thomas.

"It's delicious, Mother," said Miss Thomas. "Can't we turn that air conditioner down a little," she shivered.

"We were going to have kabob," said Mrs. Thomas, "but the O'Briens are coming for dinner tomorrow night and I thought we could have it then. Their boy just can't cook rice."

"Ganabor does a good job on it," said Miss Thomas.

"He's pretty heavy handed on the steaks, though," mumbled Mr. Thomas. "Pass me that sauce stuff."

"I didn't think the O'Briens would still be here," said the daughter. "Is there anyone new?"

"No one interesting," said the mother.

"No one eligible, you mean," said the father. "I hope you know better than to expect to find anyone over here."

"You know that's not what I mean, Daddy. Just someone good to talk to. The O'Briens are sometimes really crude — and loud."

"Everybody's pretty much a bore here," said Mr. Thomas. "Your mother and I still prefer a good book."

"That's what so wonderful about this country," said Miss Thomas, "everything moves in slow motion. It gives you plenty of time to read, and think. I want to do some writing, too."

Miss Thomas liked the sounds of bells and itineraries appealed to her aesthetic sense. Life was much easier run by a schedule. From seven until nine, while it was still cool enough, there was swimming . . .

"Allie," said her father, "you look pale as a ghost. Don't you ever get out in the sun?"

"I was going swimming every morning, but two Iranian men stand on the roof of the house next to the pool and yell things. I just can't enjoy myself anymore." Miss Thomas slept until nine. The rest of the morning was for writing.

— I've been sitting here for hours. I don't know what it is. Laziness? Boredom? It's not only that I haven't written anything. I can't think. Every day's a blank piece of paper. I'm not going anywhere. I don't do anything but daydream and play solitaire and pity myself. It's scary. It's trapping me. I feel like an inebriated fly going too close to the fly paper. No hope left. What's going to happen. Nothing. Why don't I quit kidding myself. I have no talent. I'm a third grade school teacher and not very good. I'll never be anything else. No beauty. God, why did I come here? Why?

The afternoons were set aside for siestas and reading — John O'Hara and Taylor Caldwell and cheap murder mysteries. At night there were cocktails, either at parties or at home. Mr. Thomas usually found an occasion to get drunk. Americans are not camels. They get very thirsty in the desert and Vodka is plentiful and cheap and sex flows with the alcohol — outside

the home. Miss Thomas did not care for this type of life. She limited herself to two drinks and tried to avoid dancing with married men. This country! What it does to people!

The O'Briens came over often.

"It seems like we always have kabob when you two come to dinner," said Mrs. Thomas.

"I'm glad," said Mrs. O'Brien. "Our cook does not know how to prepare rice."

"Allie, what have you been doing with yourself these days," asked Mr. O'Brien. He was not eating. He didn't like rice and was too full on beer. He spoke with a very thick brogue which shouldn't have been there.

"Jim, didn't you know? Allie's writing a Nobel Prize winner," said Mr. Thomas. He was in the state usual to him at this time of night.

"Working on a novel, eh?" said Mr. O'Brien.

"No. Just short stories," said Miss Thomas.

"Short stories! You were working on those when you were eighteen," said Mr. Thomas.

"Daddy, I wish you wouldn't joke about my writing."

"You want me to take it seriously?"

"I wish you'd take something I do seriously."

"I do. The money you earn."

"You're impossible." Miss Thomas left the room.

"Isn't it about time you got rid of that chip on your shoulder?" Mr. Thomas yelled after her.

— Why do I keep coming back? Nine untroubled months without him and then I have to torture myself again. He's disgusting. Can't he be human to me? Can't he realize how old I am? Still the child . . . ordering around . . . being superior. If he would only treat me like an individual, not a piece of property, with no value. He doesn't even show me off anymore. Am I so unimportant? My writing? Everything? I can remember . . . saying that someday I'd be more intelligent than he is. He doesn't think that now. Why not? How old was I then? Fourteen? Fifteen? It doesn't matter. He was drunk when he said that, too. God, I hate him! I have to get away from him. Chip on the shoulder. Maybe I do. He put it there. Damn you, Daddy. I'm a hell of a lot better bridge player than you are, anyway.

The Thomas family spent much of their time in eating. It was lunch time, the day after a big party.

"Isn't Ganabor ever going to learn how to cook hamburgers?" asked Mr. Thomas. "What are you sulking about?" he asked his daughter, Miss Alice Thomas.

"I'm not sulking."

"The hell you're not."

"It's just that I'm sick and tired of the parties around here. They're all the same and one great big bore."

"Well, it's over now and we can forget," Mr. Thomas looked quickly at his wife.

"They're all alike, though. That's what's the problem," said his daughter. "Do you realize how disgusting your behavior is."

"Allie . . ." said Mrs. Thomas.

"I don't know how you stand him, Mother. All those women sitting on his lap," Miss Thomas was quiet. Her father had that look that used to mean a spanking.

"Who are you to talk to me like that? Who are you?"

"Your daughter."

"Are you kidding? How could I have raised a daughter like you? A dried prune. A sterilized skeleton of a schoolteacher. Don't you tell me what's wrong. I know my faults. I don't need your uninitiated mouth lecturing me. Just because you haven't got the guts to stick your head out. I've only got one piece of advice for you — get raped!"

Miss Thomas rushed out of the dining room and into the back yard.

No one in his right mind came outside at this time of day and Miss Thomas would have gone back in if it hadn't been for her pride. Up against the back of the house there was a table where Ganabor prepared his kabob. Miss Thomas pulled herself up on the table so that she could see out over the seven foot wall that surrounded the house. The sun beat on the sand and the desert was a vast, lonely mirror, stinging yellow, pricking light. Stillness. Heat. An American dog, untrained, unknowing, looking for a place on a wall, hopped-limbed, lifting his burned feet gingerly. The heat was a headache.

An Arab, white turban on brown skin rode dustily on a chestnut horse. They stopped a few yards from the house — solitary together. Strong. No smiles, no frowns, unflinching, planted solidly — they looked at Alice. She felt an excitement in her stomach. She remembered a walk on a cold night in New Jersey. The ground was snow and the moon made it artificial. There was a red-haired man and he held her hand as they walked, without talking. The Arab was gone. Longing and hatred filled Alice. She sat still, late into the afternoon, and she could not take her eyes off the desert.

Every afternoon Alice sat on the table and watched and waited and drank a beer. She felt hope. Her eyes grew tired from squinting. Sometimes the wind blew up and dust got into her eyes and irritated them. There were tears and she rubbed them. A coolie, resting against the wall, moved his meatless body, without ambition. A dog flicked at flies. In the desert it was still, colored glass. When Alice went back into the house she could remember nothing but the desert and the longing. He did not come.

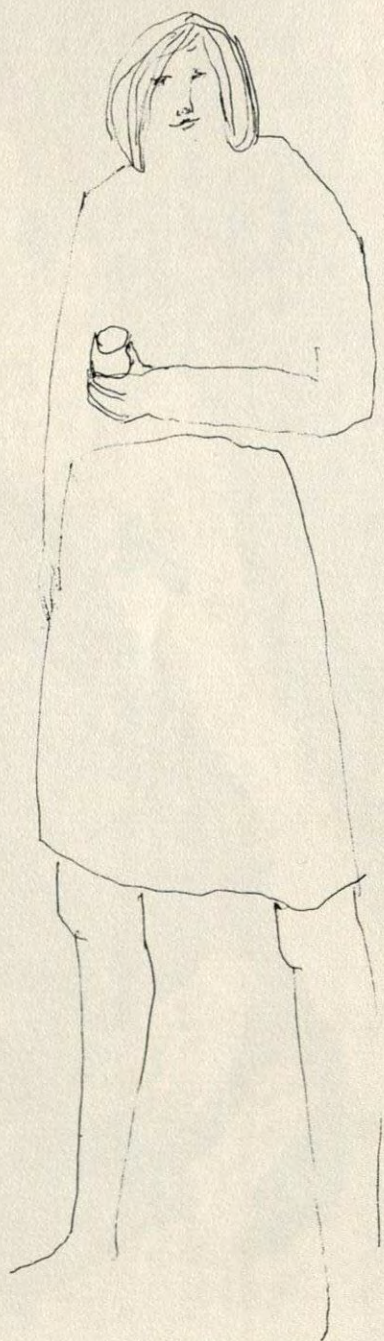
It was three o'clock and Alice sat sweating on her table against the back of the house and drank her beer. Her eyes stayed on the sand.

— I must belong. We will be slaves of the sun together. I am stripped. I can feel every part of my body. I have no intellect. The desert is nothing but passion. I can go over that wall . . . be pure flesh and blood. What would happen? Maybe he would come. He would take me for his wife because I am a virgin. Or some one else would come. Maybe he would come and rape me. Or someone else would come. Rape me. Leave me. Maybe no one would come and the desert would rape me. I would die alone in the desert. I must belong.

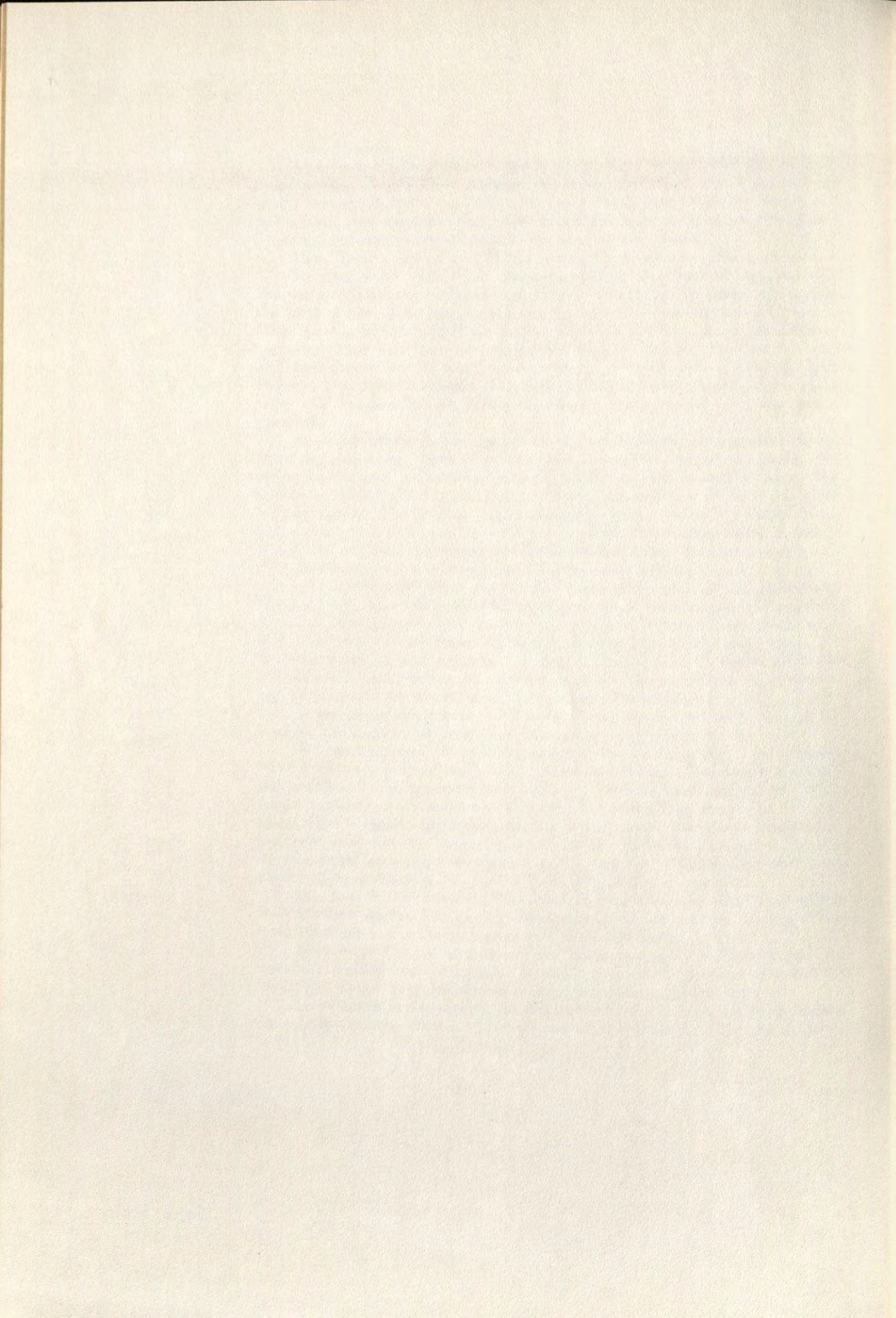
She felt the excitement. She got off the table and went over to the wall, climbed up the hot water heater and sat in the dust on the top of the wall. She sat and an odor came and filled her head.

Miss Alice Thomas went inside the house, put away her beer bottle and carefully washed out her glass. It was not good to drink at this time of day. She could hear her father snoring somewhere in the house.

Somewhere in the desert, on the outskirts of a village, an Arab, brown, in a white turban, slept in the perfume of the ground, under the shade of a tent.



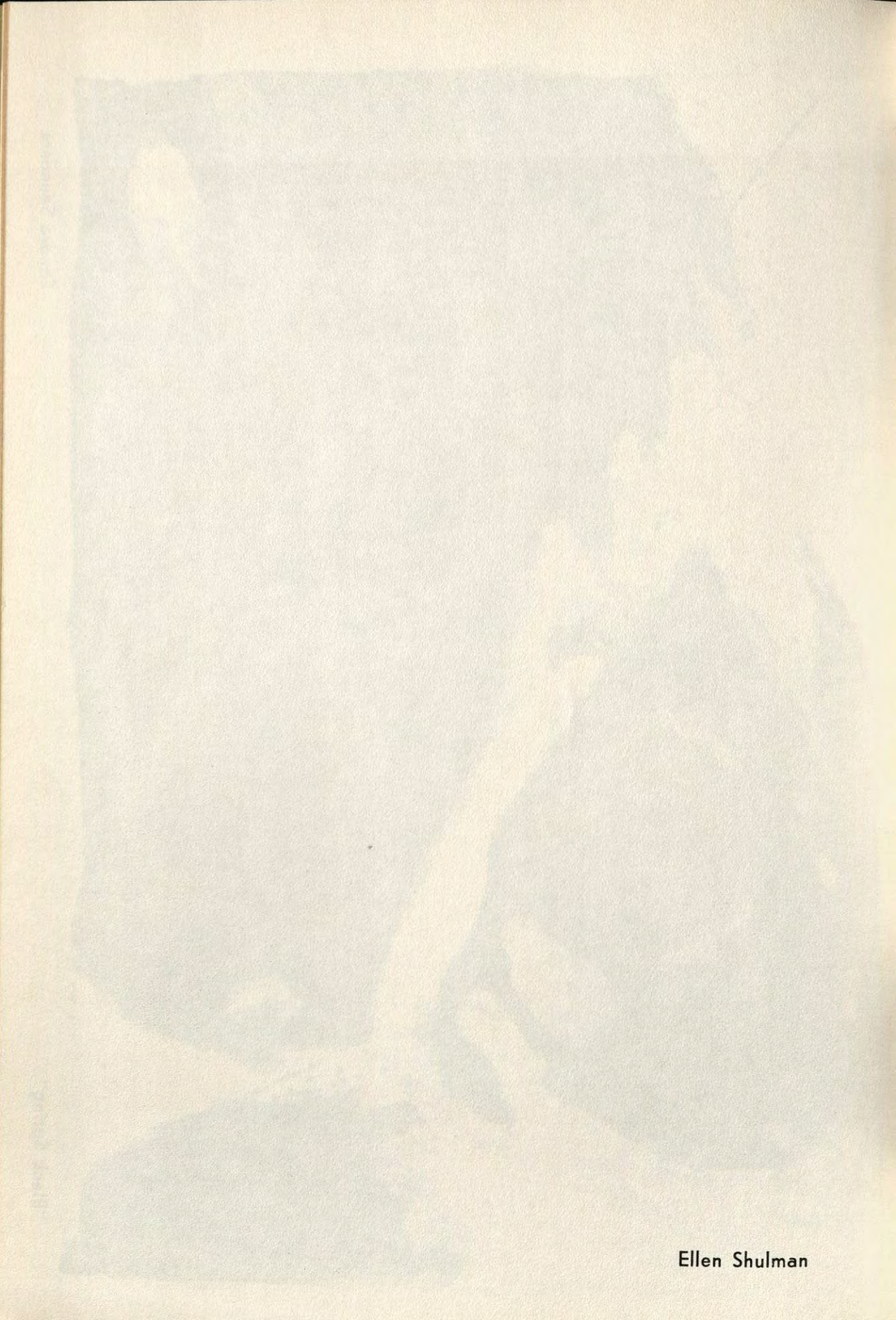
Jane Stein





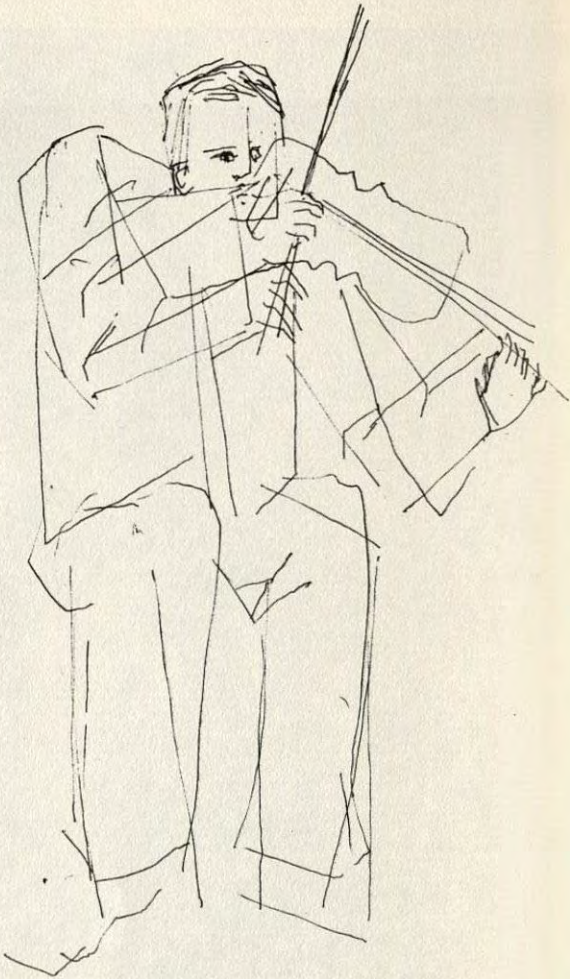
Sandra Saunders

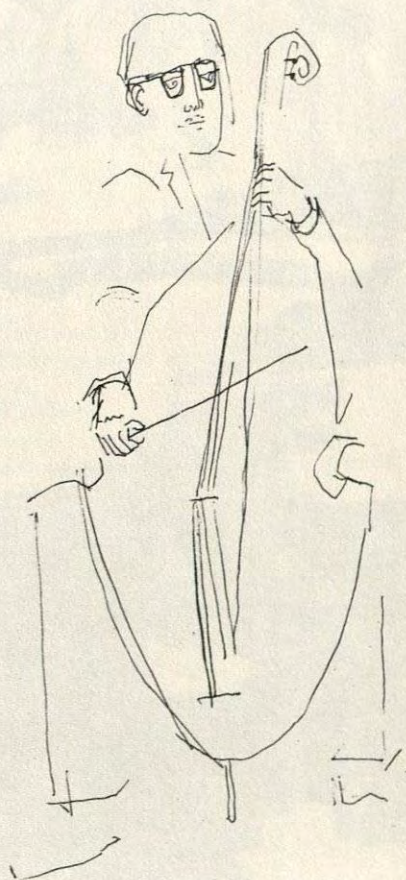
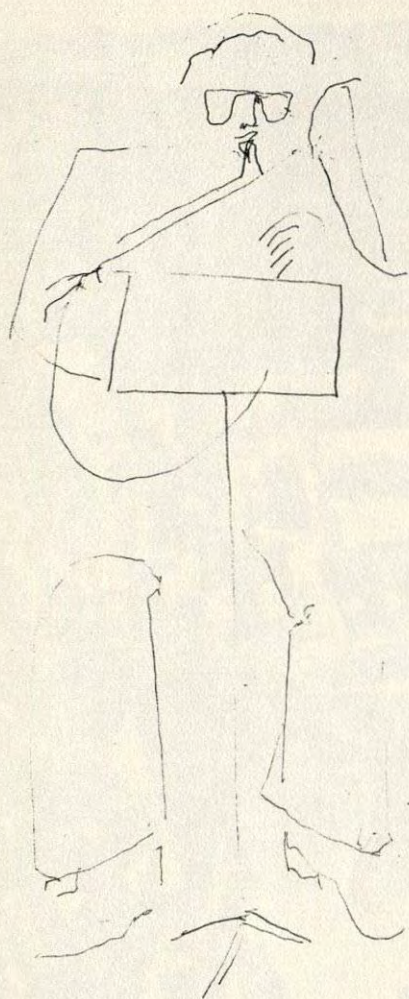
"Black Spring"

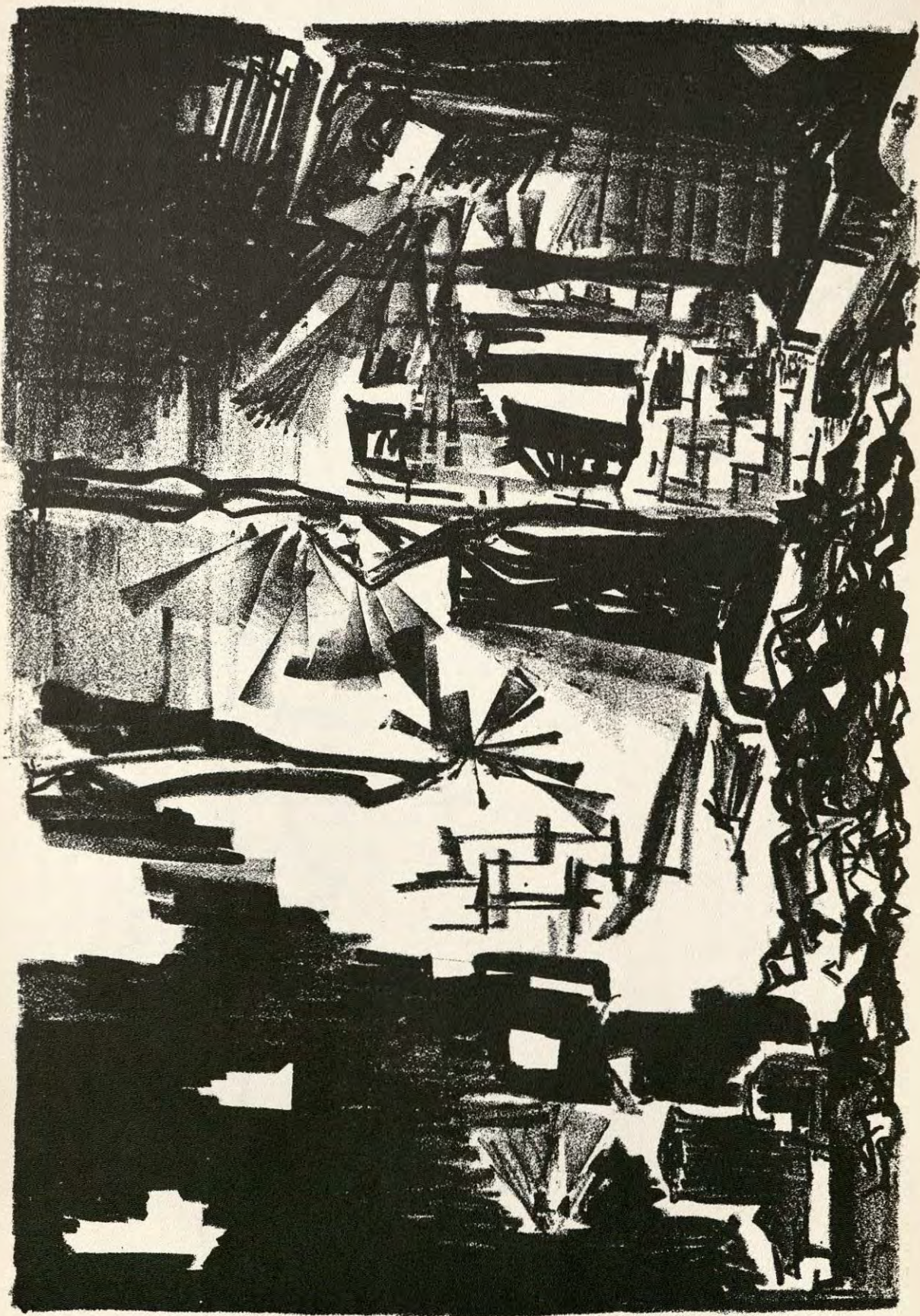


Ellen Shulman









Joan Ross

"Boston"

Suzan Dill

THE QUIET COMMUNITY

Two hermits engaged in sea talk by
an aged rock with a million paws
grasping precious microfood
into jagged shell jaws;

A dispersed fleet of snails sliding
slowly and steadily over rippled sands
sprouting life-line siphons
of cherrystone clams;

A school of stripers and blacks from
the deeper darkness to Brighton comes
seeking rock-bound mollusks
locked in snug shell homes;

Willowy seaweed waving where
I would wander my whole life — here
in this strange sea of silence;
but I must rise for air.

Susan Ford

FUNERAL

The rain is soft and white in the night;
And out of the glow of candlelight
You are gone.
I am in the stillness;
And I loved you.
Then the rain is wet and silver on the ground,
Until my heart is bound
Into its own small loneliness.
And you are gone,
And I love you.

Julie Baumgold

OLD WOMEN IN NEW YORK

The Prima Donna Pigeon Lady

They, her last audience
 Flapped their wings
 In imitation applause
 At which she dipped her claws
 (Talking all the while)
 Into a brown paper bag
 And flung precisely
 In their rumbling faces
 The shadow of
 An errant elf
 (Captured among the notes
 Of a past aria)
 And one splendid grain
 Of her beloved's heart
 Dry and powdered
 Among the stiffened breadcrumbs.
 Who would dare
 Walk past the
 Shoving birds
 Whose ritual repast
 She defended with
 Quav'ring alto abuses?
 (Which giggling children
 Saved and carried home
 To shock their parents.)
 Not us, bravely tapping
 Fingers to our head
 (The crazy sign)
 Till twirling on her toes
 She nodded once to us
 The giggling stopped
 The dogs panted
 Forgot to lift their legs
 And the birds
 In final gesture
 Pecked the sidewalk
 Long after
 She was out of sight.

The Airing

I see them across the street
 Shrouding their skirts about elastic stockings
 The official Greeting Gesture
 In the sorority of the Black Coats
 Who sweep gloves across the cold benches
 Before they sit
 To imply the presence of precedent
 Dirty old men with newspapers
 (Who nodded eternal agreement
 To the unfraternal solitude).
 Their eyes fear with cold.
 The disapproving waters
 Running slush down paper cheeks,
 Rivulets merging slowly
 Sadly unable to unite
 Features which have drawn into themselves.
 After a while of shaking chins
 Nodding heads to the music
 Of restless fingers
 Sighing on broadened laps
 They leave the bench
 The right to claim
 A few wisps of black wool
 To cling (till flattened again)
 To the peeling crags of paint
 In precarious remembrance
 Of the women going
 To familiar flats
 Where they think on
 And tell their cats
 Of their Experience.

The Great Garbo — Alone

There was the mystique
 Taking long steps
 Smooth on the cobbled walk
 (Unaware that dogs had
 Been there before)
 So thin that
 Camille's cough
 Would have blown her
 Four blocks further
 Despite her sensible shoes.
 Her arms hung
 Wrists loosened from
 Sleeves that boys outgrew
 And black fur
 That could not make her sleek
 From which emerged
 The most beautiful neck in the world
 She was the only
 Person on the walk
 And from her eyes
 Slouched wonder
 At the day
 And then she spat into the street

Lynn Allison

SILENCE

silence
while i sip a sonnet
and let its cool tasty words
flow into my veins
here is andromache the wife of troy
summoned by hektor
to comfort pertelote

round and round the sequoia redwood
round and round they go

kamehameha* routs the armies
at the pali
down they plunge and the islands are won

who calls she asks
my love will soon die
what should i do

the barnyard's lost its trumpeter
men have gone to war
shall we send them letters
oh let's
the babies cry
we needn't hurry
we have guns and generals

i aim at the keys and fire
the weight is a storm upon a petal

will he know this when he reads it
when he dies and it's taken from his hands
will he cry
will he sweat
will he be too scared to move

he won't talk i know
and his eyes will freeze
and stare that awful stare

andromache
are you crying too
come sit awhile with me

*King Kamehameha I, perhaps the greatest of the Hawaiian kings, succeeded in consolidating the Island chain during his reign. One of the legendary tales about this judicious king and sagacious warrior is that he pushed his enemy to the heights of the Pali (a sheer ridge on the chain of mountains which divides the island of Oahu and which drops to a thousand feet or more) and there, forced them to plunge to their death. It is said that the bones of these warriors are still to be found among the trees and ferns below.

Marie Birnbaum

DEBACLE

The change from the hierarchic universe of scholastic theology to the rational and scientific view can be seen in one historical event in the trial of Galileo.

Pulling up his marionette —
all dem bones
of angels, archangels, powers, and thrones —
God suddenly stopped.
The Pope's eyes popped.

Should he rent the front room to the Head?
Galileo took a while to decide.

The Pope stood by
to hold the puppet fast.
Gravity took hold:
God let go.
And the old world stock collapsed.

Marian Coates

PAIN

A small grey moth beats its wings against
A lighted window, seeking entrance.

So I beat against the
Lighted window of your heart.

Neil Warrence:

Tufts University

PASTICHE OF CUMMINGS SONNET

and though we have played (have played many through
the i-you run us — was there ever a day)

an us?
and us makes stop the sun, we-they vainglorious
to run it hurryingupthere on its way

in fields hidden dung deep down we loved
we rushing on, your arm so white
your lips; my eyes always gloved
to keep spineshivering horrors
from my sight

that when i saw you there with him
in love's play limb upon limb
i knew our haste — rush! (and, too, the you-he-they)
were again the same that you-i-they played

and though we hurried (oh, up fast) the sun
yet one-we were never one.

Pat Arnold

SESTINA

When the siren bleated ten minutes of ten
I, who had done nothing, was on the side
Of an almost-dry river. I stood
Facing a young girl, whose overblown eyes
Reflected me and the long river arm.
On a silent agreement we played house.

I thought I knew the game. First the house
Was built with small boughs and only ten
Grains of sand, taken from the arm
Of the river. With a leaf on either side
We gave the house two ears and then an eye
And stopped the game to look from where we stood.

I was not young, but thought I understood
Until she topped the little sand pile house
With a cup. She took my hand, wide-eyed
Expectant, asking me to listen
She placed the cup close to the right ear side,
And suddenly shot out her silver arm

Took piles of wet sand from the armed
River, urging me on with her eyes.
Because I did not really know the game I stood
Without moving. Nor did I know the house
Nor know what she was doing when with ten
Slim fingers she packed sand on the side.

Too heavy now, the house leaned to one side
But did not fall. At last her impatient arm
Whipped through the pile. The sand withstood
No longer. It crumbled into ten
Small piles, reflected in her eyes
Like ten broken windows in an old house.

That was all. I barely recall the house
Leaf-built, wet and dry sand on either side,
But I have always remembered those eyes —
Hers and the house eye; neither glistened
With tears when the house fell into the armed
River. Sand-filled they did not understand.

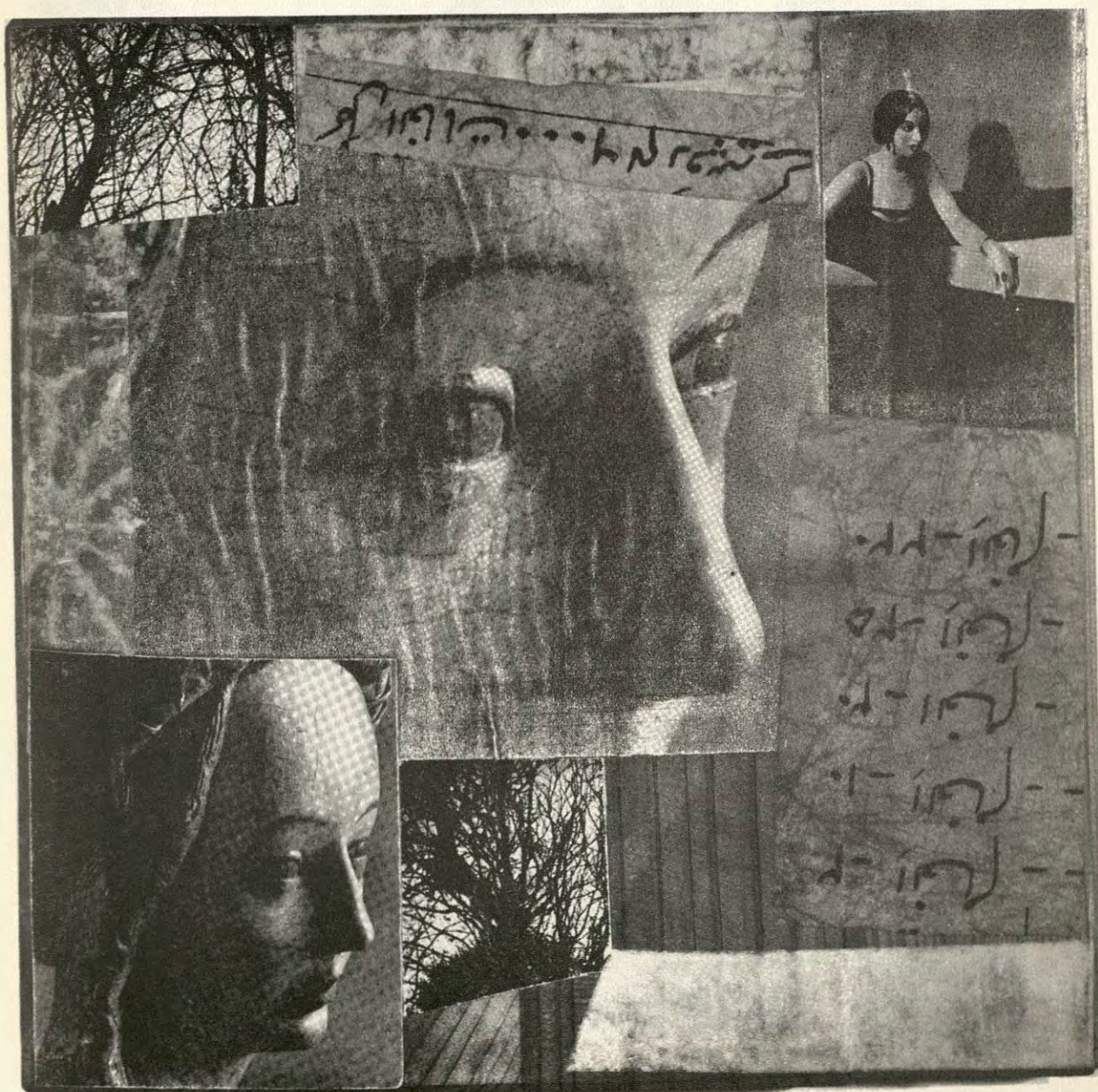
Not understand? And yet the long-built house
Wet side, ten grains of sand, were in her eyes
Reflected, leaning on a river arm.



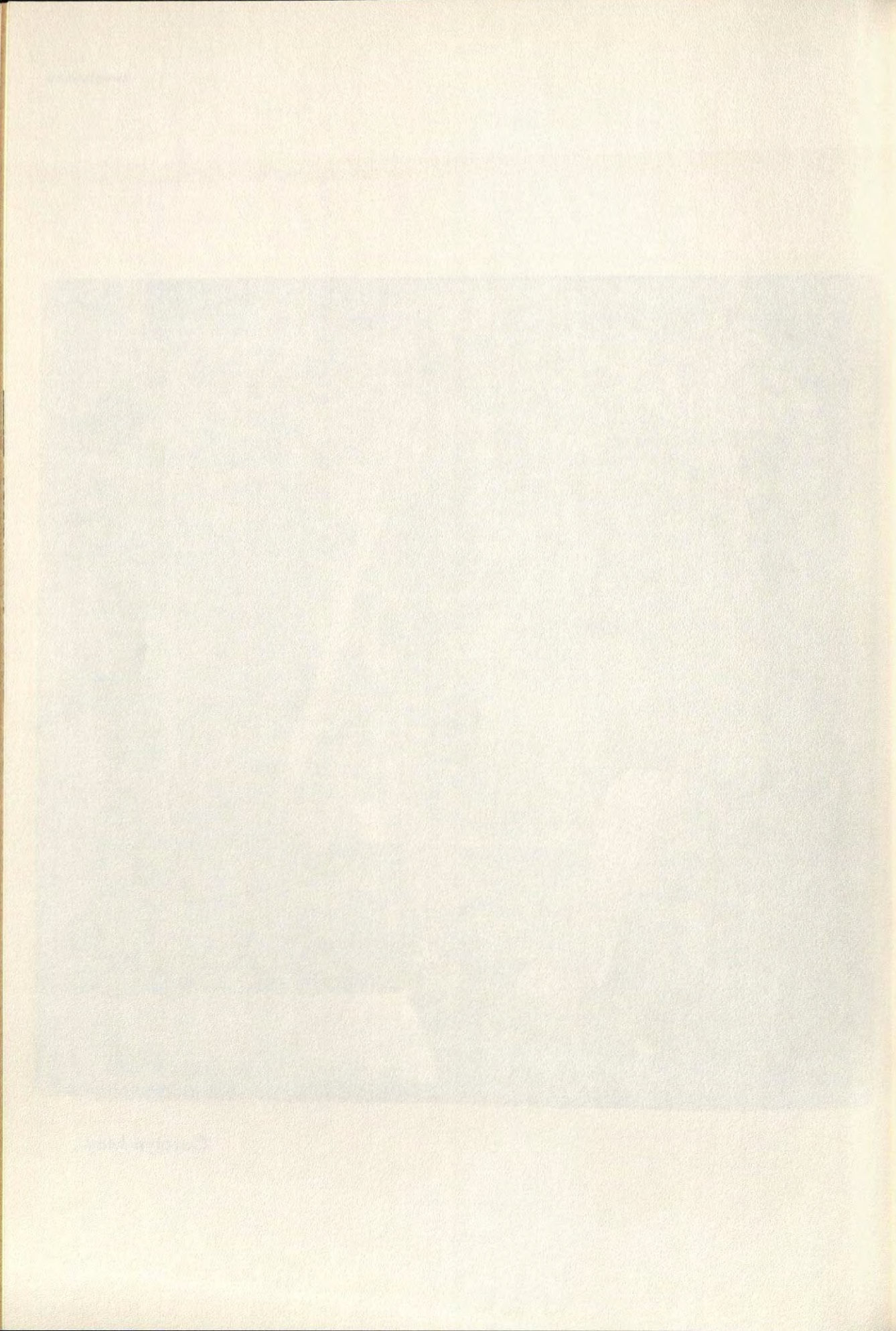




LAWRENCE HOLMBERG
University of Virginia



Carolyn May





Sandra Saunders



Karen Sheehan

Susan Schmid

SKUNK HOLLOW

Thomas rubbed his eyes before he reeled the line in. He concentrated on the up and down movement of the rod in his big hands and worked carefully in order to make the four-dollar lure even more attractive. The silver glint revealed itself finally, and Thomas wiped away the layer of foam left on his ankles by the warm green water. His eye designated a point straight ahead: if the fish were here at all, they'd be just inside that bar. Quickly he disentangled the strands of seaweed from the three hooks before casting again. As he reached into the pocket of his wool jacket for a cigarette, his glance lingered on the flaming horizon to the left. They hadn't counted on this; this time the jeep-people would lose. A black line hovered over the water in the distance; maybe — just maybe they were the gulls.

A familiar sound invaded his mind and he turned around to check his fishing gear. He watched the massive animal bound toward him with a small log between its teeth. He waited until the plaything landed with a thud and then somehow managed to pick it up with one hand and hurl it a good distance. The black dog stood immobile for an instant and then heeded the whistle of its master. Thomas had seen the pair as they walked the beach almost every evening. The boy always walked with his hands in his pockets with a fixed gaze. And he wasn't any youngster.

Thomas turned back to the sea; the next cast was underhand and rather imperfect. He buried his feet in the sand and watched the sand-crab holes bubble as the waves receded. The passing horn was acknowledged with a nod. It was Doctor Restin and his friends. He was a lousy doctor but a

damn good fisherman; it just meant that one couldn't get sick on this end of the island. Anyway, it would be a noble death, not the clean white death of the hospital. The roar of the motor diminished; jeeps were acceptable. It was the bridge that would kill everything. Caravans of people; the picnic group. But the ocean was always there to clean up, to reclaim the scattered papers and the plastic pails; the tired ocean. It might still get its due reward. The hurricane season wasn't quite over. Thomas closed his eyes for a moment. There was something different about the September sun; its warmth penetrated the bones and left the skin undisturbed. Letting his line run out he walked backwards up the beach. The fish wouldn't hit until the birds gave warning. He deposited the rod in its holder and removed the thermos from the faded bag. His eye frowned at the sparsely dotted beach in the distance as he poured the steaming coffee into his mug. They couldn't be fishermen; they would all be standing shoulder to shoulder at the jetty.

Thomas allowed himself a few minutes in a half-kneeling position. Half the sky was light now, and the air was still. And yet it wasn't really quiet. The warmth weighted down his eyelids. Four long years, he thought. Yet they liked his designs: the naked simplicity, the interplay of form and nature. His time was his own to spend at the drawing board. No, it wasn't that. He watched the sand as it sifted through his tired fingers; it was transparent against the redness. The mind is the only extravagance, he thought. What would the philosopher do with sand?

Thomas stood up and finished his coffee. As he walked back to his rod he closed his one bad eye and looked into the sun half of the air. They were gulls; big and beautiful and working just to the northeast. That meant fifteen — maybe twenty minutes. His attention was drawn to a bright color that danced toward him; it was a strange movement.

The cast was a good one and Thomas let the line remain dormant. The sea was a bright green as it had been all summer, with its gliding crestless waves. Thomas wondered vaguely what lay underneath that green — deep underneath. Once, as a child, he had almost drowned because he had attempted to breathe in the sea. Still, it had been a worth-while experiment. He smiled as another jeep passed; they didn't know the school was coming from the east. But how could they have missed the gulls? The bright figure again halted his glance as he turned his head to the left. It was a small boy; no, not really small — just thin. The red and blue striped shirt flapped with the hopping movement. Indeed he resembled a one legged sand-piper.

Thomas checked on the gulls again; they were there, but they could be moving the other way. The big hands reeled in the lure as the stripes came within a few feet and made two complete turns. Then the little frame crumpled to the ground and the hands began to push the sand every which way.

The fisherman moved a little to the right and followed the cast with an intent eye. He wished then that he had bought that spinning reel and stepped back to let the line untangle.

"Do you have to build right there?" he asked finally.

"It has to be this color," said the boy without looking up from his crouching position.

Thomas wiped away the foam from his ankles. The fish would be here

in a few minutes and he wasn't about to move.

"What're you doin'?" asked the boy.

"I am about to catch a fish."

"What if they don't come?"

"I'll take my fishing rod and go home."

The boy moved his eyes upward to stare wide at the tall man. Then the hands resumed their business. "Oh" he said.

Thomas unbuttoned his jacket in the growing warmth. He thought of changing lures; they could be bass — he hadn't thought about that. He watched a bottle floating into the shore; it probably wouldn't ever get there today. As a matter of fact, the whole season had disappointed the beach-comber group. A hurricane would bring the desired materials: the starfish and crates of oranges and dead bugs enmeshed in tar. And the sand would retreat a little, but there would be peace between the elements in the end. Nature wasn't extravagant.

It was a few minutes later that Thomas realized the boy had disappeared. He had left behind a somewhat unfinished sand castle, with delicate spires and uneven walls. The water swirled about the sound base, eager to destroy the flimsiness high above it that somehow was quite beautiful. He heard a grunt behind him but he didn't turn around. Finally the thin arms came into view as they pulled and pushed an enormous karrel toward the construction. The boy managed to get it in an upright position. Then he seemed to make a few calculations and rolled it on its open rim until it reached the castle. The dungarees raced to the other side to catch the weight as it came crashing down, to completely cover the fragile towers. The boy lifted himself atop this fort and sat cross-legged. He stared at Thomas. "I'm guarding my castle," he said.

"So I see." Thomas reeled the line in slowly. "But you can't stay there forever."

"Dunno." The gray eyes looked up into the cloudless sky. "Live here?"

"Not here exactly," said Thomas, as he watched the figures that still dotted the beach in both directions. He couldn't locate the gulls in the glare of the sun.

"Always get up early?" asked the boy.

"Sure."

"Me too. We have to, though."

"We?" Thomas pulled at the seaweed on the hook.

"We live in the lighthouse and we have to turn the light off." The arms waved into the air. "But my father really does that. I just check the walls." The gray eyes were serious. "They crack in the wind you know."

"No, I didn't know that." Thomas lit another cigarette and watched the smoke move slowly toward the bottle that still hadn't travelled very far. "Is that why the beach doesn't crack? Because it's not solid?" he asked after awhile.

"Sure," said the boy. "And we live in the house, too. Mostly in the winter, though."

"Is that good?"

"Yeah, but sometimes we get lost there. I have a room for rainy days."

"Oh?"

"It has windows all over and seats right underneath."

"Rain rooms are nice," said Thomas. "But of course it depends on the rain."

"Oh the type you trace with your finger. Sad rain. That's what my mother says." The boy put his head on a dungareed knee and nodded to the rhythm of the incoming waves.

Thomas looked beyond him. The gulls weren't even visible now.

"Do you still go to school?" said the boy.

"No. I'm an architect." Thomas smiled.

"I think that's what I'll be too." The blond head tilted a little. "Ever been to Skunk Hollow?"

"Where's that?"

"Twelve miles east about. The big fishermen live there. In tiny houses and they dry their nets in the sun. They don't have any lights, though."

"I'll have to go there sometime," said Thomas.

"Dunno. We couldn't find the channel."

"Well, they're trollers and they have to dock somewhere along the bay. It's probably hidden."

"Dunno." The boy dangled his legs over the barrel now, hitting them against the rusty brass. "You'd like it there."

"Ya know Mrs. Dundy?" said the boy through the silence.

Thomas shook his head.

"She doesn't live here either."

"What does she do?"

"She collects sand for her garden."

"Well, that's an honorable profession."

"She brings tomatoes and blue flowers."

"And does she live here all year?"

"Not here. She lives near us. Near the lighthouse."

"Oh." Thomas leaned down to roll up his pants. The water had surrounded the barrel by now and moved back a few steps.

"Tide'll be in soon," he said to the striped shirt.

The shoulder blades moved as the boy surveyed the situation. "Maybe not," he said.

"What do you think lives out there," said Thomas as he pointed the rod toward the horizon.

"More people."

"Not fish?"

"A few maybe." The boy thought for a moment. "But soon the people will have eaten them all."

"What are those people like?" asked Thomas.

"A little different. They are little and different colors. And they float."

"Like tar?"

"Sort of," said the boy. "No; like blue wax."

Thomas turned back to the water. He heard a melodic voice from somewhere.

"My mother," said the boy. "I have to go to school now." He jumped down off the barrel and tiptoed through the water. His eyes looked upward, wide and unblinking. "I'll leave the barrel here for you," he said.

"Okay," said Thomas. He watched the boy check the bottom of the barrel for any seepage — the busy hands pushed sand in the back where the waves were strongest. Then the frame straightened up.

"Hope you get a fish," said the boy.

"Thank you," Thomas nodded.

"Bye," said the boy as he walked backwards up the beach.

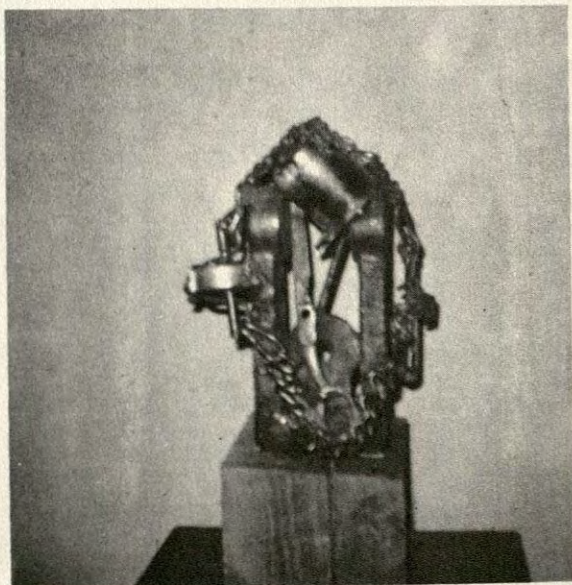
"So long now," Thomas watched the stripes turn around and hop into the distance. The melodic voice sounded again, and the stripes broke into a run, the arms waving madly.

Thomas turned back to the sea. There was a slight breeze now but the sun was full and hot. He held the rod between his knees as he took off his jacket. His legs felt tired as he tied the red wool around his waist. It was still the summer when morning was here. The ocean would take a long while to change Fall blue. He watched the top layer of water as it was stirred by the breeze — it made the waves seem to move in the wrong direction. It was an interesting thought for a new design: the actual structure of the house moving in one direction and the added elements in the other. Maybe that was the answer; like people — they're either the novelists or the painters, the shapers or the impressionists. Thomas looked to his left, into the empty sky. No, he thought. That's not the answer. The water was lapping against the sides of the barrel. Smiling, he lifted his line as he claimed the precarious seat. He lifted his legs to a comfortable position and straightened up his rod as he reeled in the line. It was too late for fish by now; the jeeps would be returning soon probably. Thomas carefully brought the lure to his side. He whipped it in back of him and watched it as it lay immobile on the white sand. Then he let it fly into the greenness before him, where the little bright colored people lived.

Julie Baumgold

THE PIG COLLECTOR

In the gloaming he is roaming
Parting black-leaved bushes
Shiny leaves, heavy wax leaves
On his bare feet
Looking for pigs (That makes the toes curl)
Silent hogs bristling for the run
Tearing thru the waxen leaves
Cold blue eyes turning red
Squeals expressing to the night
A colloquial comment on lower island life
To him approaching with the black funnel
Leading down to grainy darkness
At which they stamp
Revealing hooves more elegant
Than those of any bacon-eating lady
Which are cleft for the connotation
And splayed in deference to their Prince,
Counting souls in the underbush.



Priscilla Litwin



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